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THE EXPLOITS OF BRIGADIER GERARD.

HOW THE KING HELD THE BRIGADIER

A Conan Doyle

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I had now no doubt at all about getting into the yard, but I had very considerable misgivings as to how I was to get out again. It would be too humiliating, after trying here and trying there, to have to go back to my hole again in despair, or to be arrested by the guards outside, and thrown into those damp underground cells which are reserved for prisoners who are caught in escaping. I set to work, therefore, to plan what I should do. I have never, as you know, had the chance of showing what I could do as a general. Sometimes, after a glass or two of wine, I have found myself capable of thinking out surprising combinations, and have felt that if Napoleon had entrusted me with an army corps, things might have gone differently with him. But, however that may be, there is no doubt that in the small stratagems of war, and in that quickness of invention which is so necessary for an officer of light cavalry, I could hold my own against any one. It was now that I had need for it, and I felt sure that it would not fail me.

was over twenty feet, and I had reason to believe that there were no sentries there, except at the gates. On the other hand, I knew that there was a line of soldiers outside. Behind the little hut, my friends, which I had to open with no crackers gave these two hands.

One thing upon which I relied was the height of my comrade, Beaumont.



My Companion Seized Me by the Knees, Yelling "Help! Help!" a Prisoner is Escaping.

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could sleep as soundly leaning upon a musket as if they were at home upon a feather bed. There was one especially, a fat, heavy man, who would rest so comfortably during his two hours, that I have dropped pieces of plaster from my window at his very feet, without his observing it. By good luck, this fellow's watch was due from twelve to two upon the night which we had fixed upon for our enterprise.

As the last day passed I was so filled with nervous agitation that I could not control myself, but ran ceaselessly about my cell, like a mouse in a cage. Every moment I thought that the warden would detect the looseness of the bar, or that the sentry would observe the unmortared stone, which I could not conceal outside, as I stood within. As for my companion, he sat brooding upon the end of his bed, looking at me in a sidelong fashion from time to time, and biting his nails like one who is deep in thought.

"Courage, my friend," I cried, slapping him upon the shoulder. "You will see your gins before another month be past."

"That is all very well," said he. "But whether will you fly when you get free?"

"To the coast," I answered. "All comes right for a brave man, and I shall make straight for my regiment."

into the hole. I had wriggled through as far as my waist, when my companion seized me suddenly by the knees, and yelled at the top of his voice: "Help! Help! A prisoner is escaping!"

Ah, my friends, what did I not feel at that moment! Of course I saw in an instant the game of this vile creature. Why should he risk his skin in climbing walls when he might be sure of a free pardon from the English for having prevented the escape of one so much more distinguished than himself?

I had recognized him as a politician and a sneak, but I had not understood the depth of baseness to which he could descend. One who has spent his life among gentlemen and men of honor does not think of such things until they happen.

The blockhead did not seem to understand that he was lost more certainly than I. I writhed back into the darkness, and seizing him by the throat, I struck him twice with my iron bar. At the first blow he yelled as a little cur does when you tread upon its paw. At the second down he fell with a groan upon the floor. Then I seated myself upon my bed, and waited resignedly for whatever punishment my jailers might inflict upon me.

But a minute passed and yet another, with no sound save the heavy, snoring breathing of the senseless wretch upon the floor. Was it possible, then, that amid the fury of the storm his warning cries had passed unheeded? At

first it was but a tiny hope, another minute and it was probable, another and it was certain. There was no sound in the corridor, none in the courtyard. I wiped the cold sweat from my brow, and asked myself what I should do next.

One thing seemed certain. The man on the floor must die. If I left him I could not tell how short a time it might be before he gave the alarm. I dare not strike a light, so I felt about in the darkness until my hand came upon something wet, which I knew to be his head. I raised my iron bar, but there was something, my friends, which prevented me from bringing it down. In the heat of fight I have slain many men—men of honor, too, who had done me no injury. Yet here was this wretch,

shed tears of despair had not the thought of my mother and of the emperor come to sustain me. "Courage!" said I. "If it were any one but Etienne Gerard he would be in a bad fix now; that is a young man who is not so easily caught."



He Never Thought That a Desperate Man Was Within a Few Feet of Him.

a creature too foul to live, who had tried to work me so great a mischief, and yet I could not bring myself to crush his skull in. Such deeds are very well for a Spanish partida—or, for that matter, a sans-culotte of the Faubourg St. Antoine—but not for a soldier and a gentleman like me.

However, the heavy breathing of the fellow made me hope that it might be a very long time before he recovered his senses. I gagged him, therefore, and bound him with strips of blanket to the bed, so that in his weakened condition there was good reason to think that, in any case, he might not get free before the next visit of the warden. But now again I was faced with new difficulties, for you will remember that I had relied upon his height to help me over the walls. I could have sat down and

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CAUTION

TO OUR PATRONS: Washburn-Crosby Co. wish to assure their many patrons that they will this year hold to their usual custom of milling STRICTLY OLD WHEAT until the new crop is fully cured. New wheat is now upon the market, and owing to the excessively dry weather many millers are of the opinion that it is already cured, and in proper condition for milling. Washburn-Crosby Co. will take no risks, and will allow the new wheat fully three months to mature before grinding.

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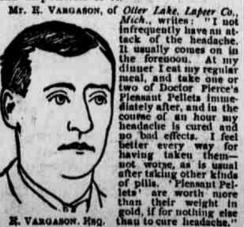
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